



This Week in the Senate - January 22-25, 2008

Criminal Justice Legislation

The Senate Criminal Justice Committee this week unanimously passed two bills sponsored by Senator Dockery designed to protect the dignity of human life.

Senate Bill 496 requires the imposition of a life sentence for a second or subsequent offense of lewd or lascivious molestation of a victim under 12, when the offender is 18 or older. The committee heard testimony from Mark Lunsford, father of victim Jessica Lunsford, on the devastating effects of molestation on victims under the age of 12.

"The molestation of a child is a heinous crime that has a devastating effect on the young victim and their family," said Senator Dockery. "We must hold repeat offenders accountable and keep them locked up and out of our communities so they cannot harm even one more child."

Senate Bill 624 addresses human smuggling in Florida. It authorizes state and local law enforcement entities to arrest human smugglers immediately, without having to wait for federal authorities to arrive and take action. This bill is intended to deter and punish unscrupulous smugglers who are not concerned with the safety or treatment of the people they transport.

"Currently our state and local law enforcement officers are unable to take action when they encounter human smuggling activity," said Senator Dockery. "Because they must wait for federal authorities to arrest a smuggler, currently evidence and witnesses are lost, and there is difficulty in prosecuting the criminals. This is about the value of human life and the dangerous conditions found in smuggling situations. Smugglers should not profit through their illegal activity."

District Activities

Last week I participated in a tour of AMI Lakeland, a community-based after school program for high-risk juvenile offenders. Our tour was led by three courteous students who explained the merits of the program, which rewards good behavior and improved social skills. The success rate is encouraging. Seventy percent of graduates of AMI Lakeland do not recidivate within three years of completing the program.

The dedication of Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve in Lake Alfred was held on Friday, January 18, and I was honored to be part of the celebration. The City worked with the Trust for Public Land to secure grant money from the Florida Communities Trust and the Florida Division of Historical Resources to purchase the property and Mackay House, which will be preserved and enjoyed for generations to come.

ELECTION DAY REMINDER

Tuesday, January 29 • Polls are open from 7am-7pm
Property Tax Amendment 1 will be on the Ballot

Senate District 15 Hike

The Second Annual Senate District 15 Hike, held on Saturday, January 19, was a great success. Over 50 people joined me at Saddle Creek Park in Lakeland to enjoy the great outdoors. This hike was a celebration of the passage of House Bill 1141 (SB 774), the Greenways and Trails Act that created the Florida Trail.



Committee Assignments:

Law & Justice Policy & Calendar Committee, Chair
Criminal Justice, Chair
Environmental Preservation
Health Policy
Transportation
Education PreK-12 Appropriations
Rules
Public Service Commission Oversight

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